The Strategic Failures of al Qaeda

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In the ebb and flow of the war against extremist—jihadi—Islam, al Qaeda and its allies have endured a significant number of major losses.[1] They were defeated in Egypt, Algeria, and the Balkans in the 1980s and 1990s. Although jihadi groups remain a significant residual threat in Iraq, the consensus of the Iraqi populace is evidently that they have no place in that nation's future. Their attempted uprising in Saudi Arabia has been crushed. Al Qaeda and the Taliban were routed from Afghanistan in 2001, and if the Taliban have gained in strength in recent years it has been due far more to the weakness of the Karzai government than to anything al Qaeda has done.

There are a variety of factors that contributed to these defeats. A central reason is the strategy and tactics used by al Qaeda in particular and the jihadis in general, and the view of the world on which that strategy and tactics are based. The extremists' entire worldview has been based on misguided or fanciful assumptions that have little or no basis in actual fact. Some of these assumptions are unique to al Qaeda, some to radical Islam (a movement that goes far beyond al Qaeda and the jihadis), and—ominously—many are common within the Arab and Muslim worlds. The bottom-line is that, while at the tactical level al Qaeda and the jihadis may sometimes be astute, even brilliant, at the strategic level they are so badly misinformed as to be almost delusional. The significance of this lack of comprehension is threefold: (1) It has led to major errors in strategy and tactics that have led al Qaeda and the jihadis to multiple defeats and disasters; (2) it points to strategic principles that can contribute to the defeat and ultimate eradication of al Qaeda; and (3) since there is no reason to believe that al Qaeda will be the last of its ilk, the next jihadi group may learn enough from the present mistakes to be even more dangerous and more successful.

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Five Critical Mistakes

Five critical mistakes are apparent, each of which had a significant strategic impact. Some were mistakes by al Qaeda in particular, while the rest have been mistakes by al Qaeda and the jihadis in general.
  • Misreading the situation in the Middle East and the role of the United States.
  • Misreading the weakness of the United States.
  • Expanding the war and bringing in additional enemies.
  • Alienating the local populace.
  • Indifference to Muslim casualties.

Misreading the Situation

A central mistake of al Qaeda has been choosing the United States, the "Far Enemy," as its primary enemy and target, and its related decision to wage offensive jihad against the United States on American soil. These decisions were the result of other and previous mistakes.

In recent decades, a variety of jihadi groups, many of which, such as Ayman al Zawahiri's Egyptian Islamic Jihad, eventually merged with al Qaeda, have staged uprisings in various Sunni Muslim nations with the proclaimed intention of replacing existing governments with theocracies that will rule according to the extremists' interpretation of sharia (Muslim religious law).[2] All of these uprisings failed. Al Qaeda and the survivors of those jihads largely refused to recognize or admit that these failures were due to their mistakes, the result of some combination of miscalculating popular support for the uprisings, use of tactics that alienated local popular opinion, and because the local governments—most prominently the Egyptian and Algerian—were effective or brutal enough in their countermeasures to defeat them. Instead, the jihadis looked for somebody else to blame. They chose to blame the United States, asserting that governments in the Arab world were placed in power, are kept in power, and are subservient to the United States, and if America were forced to withdraw its support, those governments would collapse. This conclusion has little to do with reality and shows a profound and willful disregard of the reason for their failures and a lack of understanding of their own governments and the situation in the region in general. While the United States would undoubtedly be overjoyed to be so powerful and omnipotent, it clearly is not.

The governments in the Middle East mostly came to power due to internal circumstances or conspiracies and have often been hostile to the United States. Hosni Mubarak became president of Egypt because Islamic extremists killed his predecessor, Anwar Sadat. Algeria traces its current government to a radical nationalist revolt against French colonial rule in the 1950s, and the

lineal predecessors of its government spent the entire Cold War aligned with the Soviet Union against the United States. The Baathists in Syria original-

> *The United States continues to display an impressive capability to rapidly adapt strategically and tactically.*

ly came to power in a coup and also were closely allied to the Soviets. The Saudi royal family came to power as a result of an alliance between the al Saud extended family with a militant Islamic brotherhood long before the United States even had a significant presence in the Middle East. Libya's Moammar Qadhafi seized power in a coup in 1969, spent the remainder of the Cold War aligned with the USSR, and supported antiwestern terrorism. Many of the governments targeted by the jihadis (Syria, Iraq, Libya, Egypt, and Algeria) have been hostile to the United States in the past (Syria remains hostile at present) and as a rule are quite capable of remaining in power whether or not the United States supports them.

Al Qaeda and the jihadis' misreading of the situation is widespread in the Muslim Middle East. Just because it is widespread, however, does not make it correct. The strategic implication is that al Qaeda and the jihadis have, at least so far, disastrously misconstrued geopolitical circumstances and badly underestimated the will and ability of the governments of the Middle East to remain in power and defeat the jihadis. Further, since this misreading and miscalculation are based on principles of ideology, extremists are likely to continue to make this mistake.

Misreading the Weakness of the United States

The al Qaeda leadership had a disastrously distorted misunderstanding of the United States and miscalculated the will and capability of the United States when it launched the 9/11 attacks.[3] It is evidently still repeating this error. The central point of al Qaeda's strategy has been that the US position in the Middle East, and the United States itself, is fundamentally weak and can be driven from the region by bold and determined action. This view is partly based on al Qaeda's interpretation of why the Soviet Union was defeated in Afghanistan and why it eventually collapsed, both of which, in a very selective interpretation of history, they trace back to the efforts of the jihadis. From this conclusion they have extrapolated that they can achieve similar results against the United States. Enthusiastic endorsements of Paul Kennedy's *Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*,[4] which hypothesized that the US position in the world was in danger of collapse due to "imperial overstretch," appear regularly in jihadi writings.[5] Of course, they ignore the critical fact that Kennedy was wrong, that it was the USSR that collapsed, at least partially from imperial overstretch (including the costs of its inner empire), and that 20

years later the United States is still very much the central power of the world and will remain so for the foreseeable future.

There is no agreed interpretation regarding what Osama bin Laden expected to accomplish with the 9/11 attack. It is possible that he believed the United States would collapse, as the Soviet Union had. More likely, he anticipated the United States either would not retaliate, as it had not following other attacks, such as the attack on the USS *Cole*; or would retaliate ineffectively with a barrage of cruise missiles, as it had after al Qaeda bombed US embassies in East Africa in 1998. Possibly, he anticipated that if the United States did invade Afghanistan, it would intervene in the same ponderous manner of the Soviets, which would permit al Qaeda and the Taliban to bleed the American forces while provoking a general uprising in the Muslim world. Bin Laden was evidently astounded by the speed and effectiveness of the US invasion of Afghanistan and the worldwide manhunt for al Qaeda, the speed with which the Taliban regime collapsed, the partial abandonment of the Taliban regime by the Pakistani government, and the lack of uprisings in the Arab and Muslim worlds.

The strategic significance of this miscomprehension is that al Qaeda has consistently and markedly underestimated US capabilities and continues to do so. Immediately following 9/11, America showed an unprecedented ability to move quickly and with overwhelming force. Since then, the United States continues to display an impressive capacity to rapidly adapt strategically and tactically, while demonstrating impressive staying power in Iraq and Afghanistan, although many might say in Iraq it was a close call. While al Qaeda is undoubtedly hoping that the current turmoil in the world economy presages the collapse of the United States, a far likelier outcome is that once the initial panic passes the world will look pretty much like it did before, with America in fundamentally the same position—at the center.

Expanding the War

After attacking the United States (and before), al Qaeda repeatedly expanded its theater of operations to embrace a greater portion of the world. They have done so for a variety of mutually supportive reasons. One reason is the nature of al Qaeda; it was formed as an internationalist group to fight wherever members view Muslims and Islam as being threatened. Part of the rationale has been strategic, with the intention of achieving strategic outcomes: coercing changes in policy or even regime change in governments hostile to al Qaeda's aims, such as Spain, Italy, Germany, Saudi Arabia, and, to a degree, Pakistan. Another reason has been the result of inheriting the conflicts and associated networks of allied groups that have been integrated into the organization, such as Abu Musa Zarqawi's group in Jordan and the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat in Algeria and Europe.[6] Beyond that, al Qaeda has attacked in-

frastructure and institutions in other nations largely for opportunistic reasons; mainly because they were perceived as soft targets.

Al Qaeda has staged terrorist events in other places: Indonesia, Turkey, the United Kingdom, Jordan, Spain, and especially Saudi Arabia, to name but a few of their targets.[7] The strategic significance of expanding the conflict, however, is that it meant expanding the list of enemies. By attacking nations that al Qaeda did not necessarily have any major issues with, such as Jordan, Turkey, Indonesia, and Saudi Arabia, they have created enemies they might otherwise have avoided. In every one of these attacks the response by the targeted government has significantly damaged or destroyed al Qaeda's local organization.[8] Some of these nations have formidable intelligence and security apparatus, and the attacks in all likelihood brought those agencies more fully into the international hunt for al Qaeda than they would have otherwise participated. (For example, some sources say that the Jordanian Intelligence Service was vital in locating and eliminating Zarqawi in Iraq.)[9]

Alienating the Local Population

This error consists of wearing out whatever welcome al Qaeda and the jihadis may have initially established. There are two primary ways they have done this: (1) through hostility to tribal interests and practices, and (2) hostility to the local practices of Islam.

Intriguingly for an organization led by a man who comes from a tribal society, al Qaeda often seems to ignore the tribal factor, and, in fact, sometimes seems to be hostile to tribalism. In Iraq, which has emerged as a major setback for al Qaeda, one of the key reasons the Sunni tribes eventually turned on their former partner was because al Qaeda began to attack tribal interests and leadership, often affronting tribal honor.[10] The tipping point in Iraq may have been when al Qaeda took sheikhs' daughters by force as wives for al Qaeda operatives.[11] This is a mistake that was recently repeated by the Pakistani Taliban.[12]

Believing in a very narrow Wahhabi interpretation of Sunni Islam—an especially rigid, austere, and intolerant fundamentalist interpretation—al Qaeda and other jihadis have repeatedly tried to encourage, or force, local Muslims to follow their practices and beliefs whether this was acceptable to the local populace or not. In Algeria, the jihadi insurgents were often extreme even by al Qaeda standards and routinely murdered those whom they defined as un-Islamic for such petty crimes as speaking French or not wearing proper Islamic dress. Over time, most of the population came to support the government, however reluctantly. Al Qaeda's recent attempt to revive the Algerian civil war has not met with much popular support.

In the Balkans, local Muslims, to the extent they are devout, are heavily influenced by the historic legacies of the Ottoman Empire, which was gen-

erally tolerant in its religious practices, and the legacy of surviving decades of Communist repression. Balkan Muslims generally practice a relaxed version of Islam strongly flavored with the practices of the Sufi brotherhood of religious mystics. Further, they like to drink. As one Balkan Muslim commented, "They wanted us to pray five times a day. We said we'd rather drink five times a day."[13] Al Qaeda regards these practices as un-Islamic at best and pagan at worst, and tried to encourage or enforce its own brand of "true Islam," including destroying the ornate mosques inherited from the Ottomans. Al Qaeda rapidly wore out whatever welcome it had. One observer commented that installing fundamentalism there was like "trying to grow palm trees in the Balkans."[14]

In pre-2001 Afghanistan, which historically has been devout but tolerant in how it practices Islam, the Taliban and its al Qaeda allies tried to enforce their preferred practices on an increasingly unwilling population that largely came to regard them as an occupying army of bizarre fanatics.[15] Although the Karzai government has largely failed to consolidate government control over the nation, there is almost no popular support for the return of a Taliban government.[16] Next door to Afghanistan, the Pakistani Taliban's strictures are repellent to the more tolerant practices of most Muslims in Pakistan, a fact which has been central to turning public opinion against the Taliban and generating support for the government's recent counteroffensive.[17] In Iraq, the Sunni Arabs, many of whom initially welcomed al Qaeda support for their insurgency against the United States, rapidly turned on al Qaeda when it tried to enforce fundamentalism in areas it dominated. Examples of the practices al Qaeda tried to ban were smoking and men selling women's clothing.[18]

Killing Muslims

In the course of their operations, al Qaeda and other jihadis have routinely killed Muslims. In fact, they have probably killed far more Muslims than non-Muslims. Much of this killing has been deliberate targeting of people most Muslims consider innocent victims. This contradiction was especially true in Algeria and more recently in Iraq, where insurgents attempted, and to a degree succeeded, in triggering a bloody religious war between Shia and Sunni Muslims. Many of those killed simply have been the "wrong" kind of Muslims (reportedly the Pakistani Taliban have declared that Shia Muslims are not true Muslims and should either convert, leave Pakistan, or face the consequences) or because they disagree with the jihadis.[19] Such behavior has probably been the predominant factor in alienating Middle East Muslims, who, while frequently having no particular objections to non-Muslims, especially westerners, Israelis, or Indians, being killed, react vehemently when

they are the target. Thus, al Qaeda and the jihadis have at times alienated potential and actual sympathizers.

Significance

The combined impact of these strategic errors has been a series of major setbacks, or even disasters, for al Qaeda and the jihadis. They failed in Egypt in the 1980s and Algeria and the Balkans in the 1990s. They and their Taliban allies were driven from Afghanistan in 2001, and large segments of al Qaeda's structure were demolished in the process (some al Qaeda members say as much as 80 percent of their structure was lost in the aftermath of 9/11).[20] They have largely lost in Iraq. Their attempted uprising in Saudi Arabia failed, and most of their organization there has been destroyed. At least a substantial part of their senior leadership has quietly been eliminated in Pakistan over the last year and a half. Although the Taliban have staged a major resurgence in Afghanistan, this result is largely due to rebuilding on their historic foundations in Pakistan and exploiting local grievances in Afghanistan.[21] While the situation in Pakistan currently remains uncertain, the recent overreaching by the Pakistani Taliban has finally provoked the Islamabad government and much of the country's population, resulting in a major counteroffensive that may finally break the jihadi hold on the borderlands with Afghanistan. Additionally, the more orthodox Muslim religious authorities have, although with ominous slowness, mounted an ideological counterattack against the jihadi interpretation of Islam.[22]

A potential benefit of enormous significance derived from these many miscalculations is that they can be used as part of a strategic information program to drive a wedge between the Muslim public and the extremists, especially in places such as Pakistan, where the jihadis are trying to seize the nation by means of an insurgency and civil war. This information campaign should reflect at least four key approaches.[23]

The first would be to emphasize that al Qaeda and the jihadis in general are not simply misguided souls trying to avenge the humiliation of Muslims in foreign-occupied places such as Palestine, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Kashmir. Instead, jihadi Islam is actually an attempt by a previously marginal and profoundly malignant interpretation of Islam to seize power and forcibly impose its practices on the remainder of the Islamic world.

The second approach is related to the first and is based on an Islamic critique of that jihadist interpretation and its accompanying practices. The objective here is to take advantage of the diversity found throughout Islam against the extremists. It should target the differences between the jihadis and the rest of Islam, including the nonviolent radicals, with the goals of exacerbating differences between interpretations and encouraging fratricidal infighting. Recall that theocratic Iran almost went to war with the theocratic Taliban

regime of Afghanistan, partially as a result of Taliban repression of Shia Muslims in Afghanistan. Unfortunately, to the degree that there is a debate within Islam today, it is mostly a three-way debate among conservative traditionalists, nonviolent radicals, and extremists, all of whom are hostile to the West. The key issue is that they are also hostile

> *Perhaps it would be better if the next globalist Muslim terrorist group adopt a different strategy.*

to each other. We should take advantage of that circumstance by compiling a scrupulously accurate synthesis of the tenets of the jihadis and asking, "Is this truly Islamic? Is this what Islam represents?" For those individuals or groups that say it is not, we should encourage them to theologically document their conclusions. The Islamic faithful in general and even elements of less-violent radical Islam, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, may find many of the beliefs, practices, and policies of the jihadis to be wrong, even outrageous.

Those in charge of this communication campaign should emphasize that the jihadis have sought to redefine Islam as a religion of intolerance at best and aggression and genocide at worst. Jihadists want to militarize the faith, so that Islam would literally become a terrorist religion rather than the religion of some terrorists, a redefinition that ideally will be widely opposed throughout the Muslim and Arab worlds. Unfortunately, in terms of Islamic theology and law, the jihadis may have a good case, as has been argued by a number of critics,[24] or they may have a position that is at least as strong as their opponents' arguments.[25] Even if the jihadis do not dominate the debate, we have to be ready to deal with the fact that large segments of Muslim society choose to accept the jihadi arguments and ally with them. It is immaterial as to why they may follow these extremists, whether it is because they do not disagree or do not dare to disagree, out of religious solidarity, or because of hostility directed at the United States and the non-Muslim world.[27] If large segments of Muslim society believe that extremist Islam truly reflects the basic tenets of Islam, the campaign will at least have removed any ambiguity. If the response is an embarrassed silence, we should make clear that, under the circumstances, such silence will be considered a "yes" in support of the extremists.

The third approach is to emphasize the human cost associated with jihadi atrocities, especially as it impacts innocent Muslims. We need to develop an information campaign that puts a human face on the victims.

The final approach is to publicize a scrupulously accurate account of the practices undertaken by extremists and simply ask Muslims, "Is this how you want to live your life?" We should then point out that the extremists intend to make them live that way whether they desire to do so or not, and if they do not want to follow the extremist path, it will be necessary to oppose the jihadis, including a willingness to fight them.

The bottom-line is that, by targeting and exploiting al Qaeda and the various jihadi movements' strategy and tactics, we can use their own acts and pronouncements against them to weaken both al Qaeda and its related movements and reduce much of whatever popular support they may retain. So long as we are able to prevent al Qaeda from developing new strongholds, this strategy, combined with actions that ensure continued attrition, can, if not eradicate them, at least reduce them to a much more manageable threat.

The Next al Qaeda

As previously noted, the strategic and tactical mistakes al-Qaeda and the jihadis have made are rooted in their ideology and worldview. As a result, they have continued to make the same grievous errors and omissions. Might another globalist jihadi group, or for that matter, a revamped al Qaeda with a new strategy and modified tactics, arise?

First we need to understand that al Qaeda is not really an isolated phenomenon. In many ways, it is the tip of a large iceberg. It is not the lunatic fringe of Sunni Islam; it is the fanatic core of Sunni Islam, which is a profoundly different phenomenon. Al Qaeda is an integral part of a broad and rather diverse spectrum of politicized Sunni Islam, and for that matter, of Sunni Islam as a whole. Unfortunately, the theological and ideological roots from which it grew still exist. Even if we are capable of destroying al Qaeda, we can expect it will have successors as long as those roots remain intact, especially those roots found in the Wahhabi interpretation of Islam, the Deobandi school in South Asia, and the Qutbist offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood.[27] Only Muslims can destroy those roots, and so far they have failed to demonstrate a willingness to do so.

The second thing we need to understand is that when al Qaeda attacked the United States on 9/11, it had significant and fairly widespread support throughout the Arab world. Much of this support is the result of a belief that al Qaeda was standing up to the United States and punishing it for policies that harmed or demeaned Muslims. To the degree that al Qaeda has lost that popular support, it was a direct result of the strategic and tactical errors highlighted earlier in this article. Unfortunately, that potential base of support still exists and may be tapped by more sophisticated or more selectively bloodthirsty extremists. This remaining base of support is the result of a combination of factors. Clearly, US policies in the region are a major factor; American support for Israel and the US occupation of Iraq are massively unpopular. The United States is widely, if not generally, viewed as a predatory power out for oil and control at best and as a cosmically evil predatory power at war with Islam at worst.

Unfortunately, the problem goes far beyond these negative perceptions and is rooted not just in America's foreign policy but also in the politi-

cal culture, psychology, and pathologies of the region. Much of the support al Qaeda received was rooted in the frustration, rage, and malignance with which much of the Muslim Middle East views the world and its position in it. These attitudes long predated either the existence of Israel or the US invasion of Iraq, and, in fact, preceded the United States having a major presence in the region. Middle East Muslims look at the world, especially the United States, with a primordial sense of grievance and a profound sense of resentment, which al Qaeda has been able to turn into a global threat.[28] Once a leading civilization, the Muslim Middle East has been surpassed and is now dominated by peoples it historically regarded as inferior. The Muslim Middle East has been increasingly marginalized due to the globalization of the world economy by the capitalist economic powers and is constantly threatened by a wide range of attractions related to western popular culture. Governments in Muslim territories are often regarded as corrupt, incompetent, and in the view of Islamic radicals, defeatist in the face of Islam's enemies, and often depicted as servants of the opponents of Islam who have been put in power and kept in power by its enemies.

Even more profoundly humiliating, but seldom admitted, is the military weakness of the Muslim Middle East. Beyond these factors is perhaps the greatest delusion of the globalist jihadis, the belief that there is a great world-dominating Muslim power waiting to rise and lead the masses to greatness if only the local apostates and the United States can be removed from the equation. To successfully exploit this rage and frustration and avoid the mistakes of jihadis, the next globalist Muslim terrorist group would need to adopt a different strategy and tactics. Specifically, it would need to:

• Adopt a more limited agenda, based on claims that it is waging a defensive jihad to stand up for the disenfranchised and punish the United States, Israel, the West, India, etc. for their policies and misdeeds against Muslims.

• Selectively attack the United States and other vestiges of western powers only in the Middle East and Muslim territories.

• Attack only targets that are arguably military or security related. No synagogues, no hotels, no points of tourist interest. If it had not hijacked a civilian airliner as a weapon, al Qaeda could have plausibly argued that in attacking the Pentagon it was striking a military target, by irregular means.

• Wage no civil wars or insurgencies against other Muslims. No targeting of mosques or marketplaces because they are attended by the "wrong" kind of Muslims. In Muslim theology, such infighting between Muslims is called "fitna" and is considered a grievous offense.

• Consistently and obviously attempt to minimize Muslim civilian casualties.

Adopting such a strategy and tactics would likely be difficult for al Qaeda and its jihadi allies. Such an approach goes against much of what de-

fines them as jihadis: virulently intolerant holy warriors eager to seek a martyr's death in pursuit of apocalyptic religious millenarianism. A modified strategy of this type would require a much more limited and subtle approach than the jihadis have demonstrated so far. Nevertheless, an independent global jihadi group using such a strategy and tactics is much more likely to be successful than al Qaeda, less likely to provoke a counter reaction from Middle Eastern governments, and more capable of tapping into the reserves of hostility directed against the United States and other western powers while retaining popular support. They would also be able to pass the religious muster of Muslim clerical authorities.

It will be much more difficult to wage a war against this type of jihadist enemy. The terrorists will be executing it as a campaign of regional geostrategic attrition, not as a war of apocalyptic destruction. It will therefore be much harder for the terrorists' enemies to perceive it as a war of necessity. For all these reasons any new jihadi movement that adopts this approach will be even harder to defeat than al Qaeda, and is likely to be an even greater threat.

NOTES

1. This article defines jihadis as those who share al Qaeda's ideology, are violently anti-American, and are willing to attack the United States and its interests. So far most of them have focused on regional or local issues, however, with only al Qaeda showing an international focus and agenda.

2. Others, such as Abu Musa Zarqawi's group, the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group, and the Armed Islamic Group in Algeria, started out as independent jihadi groups focused on a particular nation. They or their survivors eventually joined al Qaeda.

3. At least some leaders in al Qaeda opposed the 9/11 attacks, accurately predicting a massive US counterattack. See Brynjar Lia, *Architect of Global Jihad: The Life of al-Qaida Strategist Abu Mus'ab al-Suri* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 2008).

4. Paul M. Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (New York: Random House, 1987).

5. Samuel Huntington's *The Clash of Civilizations* is also extremely popular. Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996).

6. A successor jihadi group to the Armed Islamic Group in Algeria. It has since joined al Qaeda and is now called Al Qaeda in the Land of the Islamic Maghreb.

7. The Jordanian attack may have been Zarqawi operating semi-independently of al Qaeda Central. Zarqawi originally came from Jordan and was violently hostile to the Jordanian government.

8. For instance, the al Qaeda group in Saudi Arabia, Al Qaeda in the Land of the Two Holy Places, has evidently been so badly damaged that it has merged with al Qaeda in Yemen and now mostly operates out of Yemen.

9. See Bruce Riedel, *The Search for al Qaeda: Its Leadership, Ideology, and Future* (Washington: Brookings Institution Press, 2008), 106.

10. See John A. McCary, "The Anbar Awakening: An Alliance of Incentives," *Washington Quarterly*, 32 (January 2009), 43-59.

11. Marie Colvin, "Sunni Sheikhs Turn Their Sights from US Forces to Al-Qaeda," *The Sunday Times*, 9 September 2007, http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/iraq/article2414588.ece.

12. Jeremy Page and Rehmat Mehsud, "Pakistan Villagers Revolt Against Taleban After Militants Want Women They Widowed," *London Times*, 23 June 2009.

13. Evan F. Kohlmann, *Al-Qaida's Jihad in Europe: The Afghan-Bosnian Network* (New York: Berg, 2005), 106.

14. Ibid., 115.

15. See Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil, and Fundamentalism in Central Asia* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale Univ. Press, 2001).

16. Polling figures show that in early 2009, support for the Taliban in Afghanistan was about seven percent of the population. Seth G. Jones, "Going the Distance," *The Washington Post*, 15 February 2009, B2.

17. As noted by Waleed Ziad, "In Pakistan, Islam Needs Democracy," *The New York Times*, 16 February 2008, A19. Also see Pamela Constable, "Taliban-Style Justice Stirs Growing Anger," *The Washington Post*, 10 May 2009, A1.

18. Garrett Therolf, "Desperate Times Call for Uncomfortable Alliances," *The Los Angeles Times*, 18 June 2007, http://articles.latimes.com/2007/jun/18/world/fg-diyala18.

19. Pamela Constable, "Cleric's Slaying Signifies a Shift," *The Washington Post*, 17 June 2009, A6.

20. Lia, 315.

21. Thomas R. McCabe, "The 'New' Al Qaeda Central—A Targeting Report," unpublished paper, July 2009.

22. The most recent example of this, which may be a major turning point, is the issuance of a major book on the jurisprudence of jihad by Yusuf al-Qaradawi, a major and widely popular Islamic cleric, which declares al Qaeda's conception of offensive jihad as "a mad declaration of war upon the world." See Marc Lynch, "Qaradawi's Revisions," *Abu Aardvark's Middle East Blog*, 9 July 2009, http://lynch.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2009/07/09/qaradawis_revisions.

23. Examined in more detail in Thomas R. McCabe, "The Information Confrontation with Radical Islam," *Orbis*, 53 (Winter 2009), 99-121.

24. See Robert Spencer, *Onward Muslim Soldiers: How Jihad Still Threatens America and the West* (Washington: Regnery, 2003).

25. For instance, liberal Muslim Irshad Manji's view is that the Quran is internally self-contradictory and therefore needs to be interpreted. She proposes a liberal interpretation that is extremely critical of the profoundly reactionary interpretation most common today. Unfortunately, if the Quran is subject to multiple interpretations, the reactionary interpretations can claim to be as valid as Manji's. See Irshad Manji, *The Trouble with Islam Today: A Wake-up Call for Honesty and Change* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2003).

26. When one author interviewed Nigerian Muslim clerics regarding the cases of "adulteresses" sentenced to death by stoning, all agreed that they should have gone to the area and opposed the sentence publicly but did not out of fear of being killed as heretics. See Uwe Siemon-Netto, "The Next Pope," *The National Interest*, 74 (Winter 2003-2004), 111.

27. While movements such as al Qaeda may be new for the United States, we need to remember that the phenomenon is actually hardly new. In its heyday, the British Empire encountered violent movements of Muslim militants often enough that it had a generic nickname for their leaders: "mad mullahs." See Charles Allen, *God's Terrorists: The Wahhabi Cult and the Hidden Roots of Modern Jihad* (Cambridge, Mass.: Da Capo Press, 2007).

28. A point made in Daniel Benjamin and Steven Simon, *The Next Attack: The Failure of the War on Terror and a Strategy for Getting It Right* (New York: Times Books, 2005).